

VZCZCXYZ0002
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #1765/01 1281933
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 081933Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0304
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3348
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 6717
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9408
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY QUITO 0304
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0484
RUMIAAA/CDR USCINCSO MIAMI FL
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS LIMA 001765

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DRL FOR IRF OFFICE
G FOR LAURA LEDERER

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PINR PE
SUBJECT: EVANGELICAL CANDIDATE LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

REF: A. 05 LIMA 4197
1B. 05 LIMA 3415
1C. 05 LIMA 3414
1D. LIMA 1220

Sensitive But Unclassified. Please Handle Accordingly.

Summary:

11. (U) Ambassador met with Evangelical Pastor and Renovacion Nacional (RN) presidential candidate Humberto Lay on 4/26 to discuss Lay's analysis of the Peruvian political scene. Lay proved to be the biggest surprise of the recent (4/9) first-round presidential vote. He garnered nearly five percent of the ballots cast, a level of support that catapulted him from the ranks of Peru's many mini-candidates up to the level of second-tier contenders like Martha Chavez and Valentin Paniagua. Lay's group could yet score congressional seats, though that possibility is fading. Lay says that RN will run candidates in regional elections. One key theme he stressed was anti-corruption. Right now, Lay wants to build the Evangelicals' political brain trust. He and his group are being aggressively courted by APRA. Lay and his followers have come a long way in a short time and should not be underestimated (Refs A-D). End Summary.

12. (U) Ambassador met with Evangelical Pastor and Renovacion Nacional (RN) presidential candidate Humberto Lay on 4/26 to discuss Lay's analysis of the Peruvian political scene. Lay expressed satisfaction with his campaign, which he said had struggled against Evangelicals' traditional disdain for the immorality of politics and a late start. He noted that RN's campaign only fired off on February 25, with a successful 50,000-person gathering at Campo de Marte in Lima.

13. (U) Despite the late start, Lay noted that RN had polled just under 5 percent of the vote nationwide and had done particularly well in some areas. Lay ticked off his vote totals in some geographic regions: in the jungle (Loreto), he got 13 percent; in Madre de Dios, 21 percent; in Huanuco, 8-9 percent. (Note: Embassy election observers working for the OAS noticed that Lay polled 9-10 percent in Carabayllo, a marginal, northern cone district of Lima. RN also had observers in place at most tables, in contrast to other minor parties.) In all, Lay was pleased. His party's immediate challenge, he said, is to make the minimum number of votes to gain congressional representation. Beyond that, Lay is

looking toward organizing for regional elections in November.

He said that RN would not seek alliances with traditional parties, but might consider alliances with regional or local organizations.

¶4. (U) Lay identified his biggest challenge as changing Evangelicals' traditional disdain for politics as a corrupt, worldly activity to be avoided. Beyond that, RN is also looking to market its moral message to non-Evangelical Peruvians, promising cleaner government. Not all of RN's candidates in the recent election were Evangelicals, though that group remains its base.

¶5. (U) Lay identified the issues most important to RN:

-- A law guaranteeing religious equality.

-- The fight against poverty, social exclusion, and upper class indifference.

-- Corruption.

¶6. (U) Lay stressed corruption as a key point for the Evangelicals. He lamented that corruption has become so generalized in Peru, that it is expected. He cited the popular cliche about former President Fujimori -- "he robbed, but he got things done" -- as an example of how far the country has fallen. Lay asserted that generalized corruption would continue to plague Peru until the countries leaders could provide examples of honest leadership.

Lay's Connections with the U.S.

¶7. (U) Lay noted that both he personally and his campaign had had few contacts with their counterparts in the U.S. He mentioned that he had met with members of "the Republican Coalition" (the Christian Coalition?) in Washington, DC in October 2005. He said the U.S. activists had "opened their doors" to him, but that no concrete cooperation resulted as Lay himself became submerged in forming up his party and starting his presidential campaign. Lay stated that education was the next big task for RN.

¶8. (U) Lay added that RN had run its own Institute of Political Science before the campaign, to train up young people in politics and the proper relationship between faith and politics, but that this too had lapsed with the campaign's onset. Lay said it was time to re-start this initiative. Ambassador suggested that Lay give Embassy the names of possible IV candidates and potential cooperative activities with IRI and NDI were also suggested.

The Fight to Get Into Congress

¶9. (SBU) Lay said that he expected RN to gain four congressional seats. He also alleged that RN's vote totals had been subject to downward revision by Peru Possible activists. (Note: RN seems to be giving up on crossing the electoral minimum to enter Congress -- currently, with 70 percent of the vote tallied nationwide, RN is about 13,000 votes short of the 4 percent required for representation in the Congress in their Congressional vote. In a recent move, RN is arguing before the National Elections Board that the party's presidential vote total, which exceeded their votes for Congress, should be used to determine the party's eligibility for the legislature. End Note.)

APRA Helps/Courts Lay

¶10. (SBU) Lay acknowledged that APRA had helped him by providing him with copies of vote tabulations from various precincts. Lay stated that future RN Congress reps would

work with other blocs, but would not engage in binding alliances that implied support today for some undefined quid pro quo tomorrow. Instead, he said, RN reps would cooperate with other blocs in Congress on an issue-by-issue basis.

(Note: Help with vote tabulations is just one part of a charm offensive that APRA has launched in Lay's direction.

According to sources in the Evangelical movement, APRA reps are also offering speedy passage of a law guaranteeing religious equality and the inclusion of Evangelical pastors in the pre-inauguration ceremonies for the President-elect, a ritual that has until now only involved the Catholic Church.

End Note.)

Comment:

¶11. (U) In other meetings with Poloff, Lay has said that his campaign resembles Humala's, that he, too, is anti-system and goes after the vote of those in the most humble social sectors. Observations of his campaign rallies and his vote totals in marginal areas tend to bear this out. It is likely that his 4-plus vote percentage might otherwise have gone to Humala or to blank ballots. Lay and his sector are likely to exercise increasing influence in Peruvian political life.

STRUBLE